

THE WITNESS IN WAX

By Lillian Bennet-Thompson

Drawing by George Varian



"Read the Rest of the Record!" Thrilled a Clear, Distinct Voice.

THE clock had just struck eight as Captain Coryell, in charge of the desk at police headquarters, banged the telephone receiver on its hook and turned from the instrument with concern written on every lineament of his usually placid countenance. "Harmon," he called to his stenographer, who sat looking at him in astonishment, "send Hayden in to me at once!"

When Hayden, in obedience to the summons, lounged languidly in a moment later, he found his chief pacing uneasily up and down, puffing clouds of smoke from his cigar, and muttering excitedly to himself.

"Here's the deuce to pay, Jimmy!" he began, turning at the entrance of the detective. "You take Dobbs and another man with you, and beat it up to Kings Gate, the Rance place, on the double quick! Old John Rance has been found dead, with indications pointing to murder, and it's up to you to get busy right away!"

"John Rance dead!" All Jimmy Hayden's languor vanished as if by magic. "Murdered! When? How?"

"No details at all. Hayes, the butler up there, just telephoned the message in. You'd better see him about it first. He's a bit upset; but seems to have kept a clear head. Don't let the news sift out till you learn something. I've telephoned for Donley, the Coroner's physician. The old man was shot through the heart, either murder or suicide, and it's a Coroner's case in either event. That's all. Now start!"

EVIDENTLY the news of the tragedy had not leaked out as yet; for everything was quiet at Kings Gate when Hayden and his two assistants rang the bell twenty minutes later. They were admitted by Hayes, the butler, who gravely said that he had telephoned to the Captain and that, pending the arrival of the police, he had done his best to keep the women servants quiet, and had refused to permit them to leave the house or to communicate with anyone outside. Then he led the detectives down the broad, gloomy hall and opened a door on the west side. Hayden waved his subordinates back and stepped through the doorway, the butler following. "This is—was—Mr. Rance's study," the latter said. "Nothing has been disturbed. I had everything left just as we found it."

Hayden nodded in appreciation of the other's foresight, and made a quick survey of the room.

It was almost square in shape, with windows, the shades of which were closely drawn, on the west and south sides. Overhead the incandescent lamps still burned in the electrolier. Hayden stepped to the windows and raised the shades, drawing the curtains aside to let in daylight. The western outlook was

into a beautifully kept garden, while the southern windows opened on the porch and commanded a view of a velvety expanse of green lawn, dotted here and there with flowerbeds and trees. Noting that all four of the casements were firmly locked, Hayden turned back to the room again.

The furniture consisted of a couple of easy chairs, a small covered cabinet, a teakwood taboret supporting a marble Victory, and a huge desk which stood a little way from the center of the room, facing south, with its side to the door. Beside the desk a small stand, studded with little upright posts, held several commercial graphophone cylinders.

IN a swivel chair, in front of the desk, and slightly turned from it, his grizzled head sunk on the mass of papers and documents that littered its surface, sat John Rance, millionaire traction king, the most powerful and wealthy, the most hated and feared, man in two States. One hand gripped the arm of his chair, the other hung at his side. A scarlet stain on the white shirt bosom showed the entrance of the messenger that Death had sent for him. The eyes were fixed in a stare of mingled fear and rage. Even the lines of cruelty and avarice remained about the thin lips; the face looked even more repulsive and pitiless than it had in life. The mouthpiece of the graphophone, into which he had evidently been dictating, lay on the desk almost touching his head, and the low, monotonous hum of the mechanism ceased only when Hayden leaned over and extinguished the desk light, thus shutting off the power.

John Rance had been a hard man. From his earliest boyhood he had known only one god, gold; he had known but one pastime, one pleasure, the pursuit of gold. Those who had stood in his way or opposed him had been pushed aside or crushed; it mattered little to him which, so long as they were removed from his path. The beautiful young wife whom he had married because of the dower she brought him, had drooped and withered in the atmosphere of greed and money getting in which he forced her to live. All the affection of her nature she lavished on the son who presently came to her; and when, on the boy's tenth birthday, she had slipped out of life, John Rance was in his office in the Player Building, planning new ways of adding to his fortune.

Her death had made scarcely a ripple on the surface of his life; and her son was promptly shipped off to school and later to college, that he might be ready when the time came to take up the work his father would some day have to leave off,—the work of piling dollar upon dollar. John Rance had lived his life alone; he had cared nothing for human com-

panionship. And his death would cause hardly one word of pity, one single honest tear.

USED as he was to scenes of horror and crime, it took Hayden a moment to recover from the spell the dead millionaire seemed to cast over him. Then he addressed Hayes, who stood waiting for him to speak. "When did you first discover the body? Or did some one else find it?"

"About half-past seven this morning, sir," was the reply. "Jane, the housemaid, went up to Mr. Rance's room, to call him for breakfast. Mr. Rance was in the habit of breakfasting at eight, sir. She found that he was not there,—the door was open and the bed had not been slept in. So she came down here to see if he had fallen asleep in his chair. Several times when he has been working late, dictating letters for Miss Clerford to typewrite the next day, we have found him asleep before his desk in the morning. Jane knocked, and when Mr. Rance did not answer she opened the door. I heard her scream, sir, and came at once. I made sure Mr. Rance was dead, and then I decided it was a case for the police. So I telephoned Captain Coryell. That is all, sir."

As Hayes finished speaking, Donley, the Coroner's physician, entered the room; and after obtaining from Hayden the facts as just related to him, proceeded to make an examination, while the detective turned his attention to the housemaid, who was incoherent and almost speechless from fright.

"That wound could never have been self inflicted," said the physician, as Hayden reentered the room. "It was made by a bullet from a pistol of medium caliber, fired from a distance of at least four feet, I should say, judging from the powder marks. It is on the right side, and Mr. Rance was left handed; but it pierced his breast just in front of the right clavicle, and took a diagonal course downward, through the heart. To have shot himself, the old man would have had to hold his hand in a very awkward position, with his left wrist above the level of his right shoulder. Have you made a search for the weapon?"

"No, I have had time to do nothing more than to give a hasty look about," was the reply. "I shall make a thorough investigation at once." A moment later he uttered an exclamation of triumph.

"Look!" he cried. "This was under the couch, pushed back against the wall!" and he held up a .32 caliber revolver, with a short barrel, the stock handsomely ornamented with silver. "One chamber empty. Undoubtedly the weapon with which the old man was shot," he added; "but a careless trick of the murderer to leave it lying around after the crime. Aha! A monogram!"

The detective and Donley bent interestedly over the revolver, and made out the initials engraved on the silver mounting.

"J. E. R., Jr.," spelled Donley slowly. "That looks as if the gun belonged to old Rance's son Jack."

HAYES," said Hayden, quickly wheeling on the butler, who stood looking over his shoulder, "did you ever see this revolver before?"

"No—yes—no, sir," stammered the man, his face going white.

"I want the truth, Hayes. You know you have! Where was it when you last saw it?"

"In Mr. Jack's dressing case, sir, the day he went away to the mines last April. He had to carry one out there, and he always took this one with him. It was his favorite gun, and he said he carried it all the time. Oh, sir!" he broke off, "you don't think Mr. Jack had anything to do with—"

"I don't think anything about it yet, Hayes," said Hayden sternly, "and I don't want you to try to lie to me again! I want you to tell the truth first, last, and all the time. If you or anyone else in this house tries to deceive me, you'll probably get your Mr. Jack into more trouble than you'll ever get him out of again. Now I want to know who was here with Mr. Rance last night. Did Mr. Rance smoke cigarettes?" he added suddenly, and with apparent irrelevance.

"No, sir. He smoked nothing but black cigars. He

didn't approve of cigarettes, and I know he never smoked them."

"Then who was here last night? Did you let anyone in?"

"No, sir; not a soul."

"Did you or anyone else go out of the house and come back again after nine o'clock last night?"

"No, sir. I am sure of it. The maids were all in, and I know Mr. Rance did not leave his study, because he told me he would be at home all evening and did not wish to be disturbed. Besides, I heard him moving about once or twice when I passed the door, and once he rang for fresh cylinders for his graphophone. And I let no one in, sir, no one at all."

"Has anyone a key?"

"No one besides Mr. Rance, sir."

"No one?" looking keenly at the man, who dropped his eyes and fidgeted from one foot to the other.

"No one but Mr. Jack." The reply was so low that it was almost inaudible.

"Ah, yes. And Jane tells me she heard voices raised in dispute in the study when she came down to get a cup of tea about half-past nine. There is a splash of mud in the hall, just inside the door, which must have been made after it started to rain last night. The streets were dry as a bone until nine o'clock. This begins to get interesting. It pans out just this way, doctor," he continued, turning to the physician:

"Hayes lets no one in; yet some one comes in, and comes in the front door. No one could get in the windows, because they are all locked. Jack Rance is the only one who has a key besides his father, who was not out. There are cigarette ashes and two stubs on the ash receiver; yet John Rance did not smoke cigarettes. Those cigarettes were consumed last night, because the room smelled strongly of Turkish tobacco when I came into it. There is a revolver, which Hayes identifies as the one young Rance took away with him last April. You remember, there was some fuss in the papers when the young fellow went West,—talk about his father not approving the career he had chosen, and all that. We know there was bad blood between them."

"The old man had evidently been dictating letters to the machine," said Donley, with a gesture toward the half-filled stand. "Perhaps we could learn something from that."

"Do you know how it works?" asked Hayden.

"Miss Clerford will be able to show you, sir," ventured Hayes, coming forward. "She comes every morning about this time to get the work Mr. Rance has done the night before."

"THERE'S the bell now," interposed Hayden. "If it is the young lady, Hayes, admit her; but allow no one else in the house. You had better tell her what has happened, so that she will be prepared, and then send her in here to me. You needn't come back yourself; I sha'n't need you any more just now, and if I want anything I can ring. I think, doctor," he went on, "that it would be better to remove the body before she comes in, or there'll be a scene. Women always scream and faint at the time when they need all their senses."

But there was no scene, contrary to Hayden's prophecy. Miss Clerford was a very self-contained young woman; and though she looked white and terrified when she came into the room a few minutes later, and turned her head away from the desk, she was far more composed than the detective had supposed possible. For, even after the body had been removed to another room, the scene was ghastly enough.

The detective, however, wasted no time; but came to the point at once. "Miss Clerford," he said, "Mr. Rance had evidently been writing some letters before his death. We hope to be able to obtain some clue from them, and as we do not understand the mechanism of this contrivance," pointing to the graphophone, which was fitted into the back of the desk, "we shall have to ask you to assist us. Can you read these letters off to us?"

"I shall have to put the records on the reproducer," the girl replied; "but I shall be glad to help you all I can. The machine has evidently been running all night," she added, removing the cylinder that was still on the machine and showing the men the deep groove the revolving needle had worn. "It must have run on until it got to the end of the cylinder." Going to the small cabinet, the girl removed the cover and disclosed the reproducing apparatus.

"I suppose I had better read the cylinders in order?" she asked; and Hayden nodded, drawing up a chair for her to sit down.

"THIS is a letter to Stockton & Co.," said the even voice of the girl at the machine, "ordering a sale of some property on Long Island. Do you wish me to read the letter as it stands, or merely to give you the gist of it?"

"Please read every word of every letter, together with anything else, directions to you or what not, that Mr. Rance may have said," commanded Hayden.

The girl read a number of unimportant letters in a quiet voice, reached the end of the cylinder, and substituted another. She had almost reached the middle of the fifth and last cylinder, when Hayden leaned forward suddenly with absorbed attention. Miss Clerford read:

Mr. WILLIAM BLAKE, New York City.

MY DEAR BLAKE—I wish you would find time to come into the office to-morrow morning, or telephone me what time you can come to the house. I have finally and definitely

decided to make a change in my will. John, jr., has refused to listen to reason. He talks largely of love for the girl, and says he is going to marry her. There is no use in your attempting any further arguments in his favor. My mind is made up, and if you won't make the changes I want, I'll get another lawyer who will!

"Oh! what a shame!" breathed the girl, for a moment forgetful of her audience.

"Go on, please, Miss Clerford," said Hayden, his eyes gleaming.

"Miss Madge Clerford," obediently read the young woman, then paused in astonishment. "Why, that is my name!" she cried.

"Go on, please," repeated the detective.

MISS MADGE CLERFORD

DEAR MADAM.—I find that it is inexpedient to permit you either to carry out your design to marry my son or to continue in my employ. I had hoped that you might turn out differently from your brother; but intrigue and ingratitude seem to be family characteristics.

"The old devil!" commented Donley under his breath. "If that isn't John Rance all over!"

The girl said nothing; but her eyes filled with angry tears.

"There's another letter, isn't there, Miss Clerford?" Hayden broke in.

The girl flashed a scornful glance in his direction. "Yes," she answered quietly, "there is something more on the cylinder. Listen:"

MY DEAR JACK.—I have written to-night to Blake, and to-morrow he makes the change in my will. What I wrote you last week, I meant.

The girl's voice broke and quivered; but the keen eyes of the detective were fixed on her, and in them she read neither pity nor understanding, only impatience. After an instant she went on:

Perhaps her enthusiasm for you will not be so intense after she reads—*Why, Jack, my son! You here? Have you come to your senses? I was just writing to you!*

As she finished, the girl tore the receivers from her ears and covered her face with her hands. Hayden leaped to his feet and slapped Donley joyfully on the shoulder.

"What did I tell you?" he cried. "Isn't that conclusive enough?"

"Wait, there may be something more on the cylinder, another letter," suggested Donley. "Miss Clerford—Oh, I say, Hayden, it's cruel to make that girl read those letters!"

But human feelings were nonexistent to Hayden where his profession was concerned. "Miss Clerford, will you listen and see if there is anything more on the cylinder?" he asked crisply.

The girl controlled herself with a violent effort and after a moment lifted the receivers again. "I—I will see if there is anything more," she said.

Once more the grinding whir of the machine filled the room. The tiny pointed bit of metal traveled round the waxen surface, reached the middle, passed it.

"There is nothing more," said the girl, holding out the cords to Hayden. "There—listen for yourself."

She readjusted the reproducer, and Hayden heard the deep voice of John Rance as he dictated the letter to his son; heard, too, the voice pause in the middle of a sentence and the change from the monotonous tone of dictation to the glad cry of welcome; heard, and was satisfied. He listened for a moment or two, till the dull grind of the machine annoyed him, then threw off the receivers and offered them to Miss Clerford, who sat with white lips and downcast eyes, from which the scalding tears dripped down her cheeks. As she made no move to take them, he slipped the receivers back into her ears again, and turned to Donley.

"Our next move will be to find this young Rance," he said. "Now I want to make a thorough examination of those window casings."

"I think," Donley answered him, "that your next

move ought to be to send Miss Clerford home in a cab. She looks as if she might drop any minute."

"Oh, I guess not," said the detective, wheeling and inspecting the young woman with critical eye. "She—Great Scott!" The pallor of the girl's face changed suddenly to ghastly white; she leaned forward, every muscle tense; then, with a low, gasping cry, she slid forward into an inert little heap at the feet of the two men.

With a little thump the needle of the machine slid into the deep groove at the end of the cylinder and traveled round and round in the path it had worn for itself the night before.

"Here, Hayden," Donley said, bending over Miss Clerford and slipping his arm under her head, "I told you this was going to be too much for her. The best thing you can do is to get her home and into bed at once, or she'll go all to pieces. I tell you, this is rough on her, the whole business! Get her home, and then get this stuff down to the Captain. Then go out and find Jack Rance."

YOU won't have to look far for me." The voice came from the door, which had opened silently behind the two while they were interested in the girl before them. "Hayes reached me at my club by telephone, and I thought my place was here. But I want to tell you," he went on with rising anger, "that you're worse than brutes to bring that girl here and put her through such an inquisition as you appear to have been conducting."

"And I want to tell you, Mr. John E. Rance, jr.," cut in the detective, "that you are my prisoner, and that anything you say will be used against you! Here, you, Hayes," as the frightened face of the butler framed itself in the doorway, "call a cab and put this young lady into it and get her home! I won't need her any more to-day."

"What you need to-day is a good horsewhipping!" roared Jack Rance, advancing threateningly. Then, suddenly remembering the errand upon which the men had come, he added in a little milder tone, "I dare say you mean well, and your zeal in your work is commendable; but you ought to use a little sense. Are you all right, Madge?" as the girl opened her eyes and looked blankly about her.

"Jack!" she sat up suddenly and stretched out her arms. "You didn't do it," she said; "I know you didn't!" Her eyes fell on the detective; she shuddered, tried to speak; then merciful unconsciousness blotted out the scene.

Rance leaned over and kissed her hand. "Take care of her, Hayes," he said to the man in the doorway. "Take care of her, for I love her." He turned and followed Donley from the room, while Hayden brought up the rear.

"Mr. Jack!" cried the butler. "Oh, Mr. Jack!"

Rance looked over his shoulder and smiled reassuringly. "It's all right, Hayes," he said. "I'll send for Wells. He'll know what to do." Then the front door opened—and closed.

THE days that followed the inquest were black ones for Jack Rance. The verdict of the Coroner's jury had come like a blow in the face to him. "We find that the deceased came to his death from a wound in the heart, caused by a bullet fired from a pistol in the hands of John E. Rance, jr., and we recommend that the said John E. Rance, jr., be held for trial on the charge of homicide," the foreman had said. The evidence was all against the young man.

The month that dragged its weary length along before the day set for the trial had seemed like a year to Rance. The nature of the crime of which he was accused had made it impossible for him to obtain bail, and his health suffered in the close confinement

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GREAT FOLK AND SMALL

By Marguerite Ogden Bigelow

Small people are easily known when they are thoughtfully considered;
But many great persons have lived without recognition;
And there are great people to-day, perhaps the greatest, everywhere, and among our friends,
Whom we do not sufficiently honor.
By these things we may discover them.

Great people are always laborers,—and small people usually are laborers too;
But the labor of small people is incidental, and for cash;
The labor of great people is essential, and for a cause.

Great people are always fighters, against the wrong, against stale and outworn custom;
Small people are often fighters, when they are massed against the great people.

Great people are people of peace, who pick no quarrel save for righteousness' sake;
Small people are people of peace who balk at a fight when the odds are against them.

Great people are always lovers, of friend and mate, of the nation, of God;
Small people are often lovers—of themselves.

Truly it is on this power of love that greatness rests;
For any who loves great things sincerely is become a great person,
And any who loves only little things will remain little.

All small people may become great if they will;
But the great soul cannot be dwarfed!

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and began to read. Bower watched her face with a maleficent confidence that might have warned her had she seen it. But she paid heed to nothing else at that moment save the mysterious words scrawled in a foreign handwriting: "Have investigated 'Firefly' incident fully. Pargrave compelled Mackenzie to explain. The American, Charles K. Spenser, recently residing at Embankment Hotel, is paying Miss Helen Wynton's expenses, including cost of publishing her articles. He followed her on the day of her departure, and has since asked Mackenzie for introduction. Pargrave greatly annoyed, and holds Mackenzie at your disposal."

"KENNET?" Helen went very white; but she spoke with a firmness that was amazing, even to Bower. "Who is Kennet?" she said. "One of my confidential clerks." "And Pargrave?" "The proprietor of 'The Firefly.'" "Did Millicent know of this—plot?" "Yes." "Ah, dear Heaven!" she cried, "for what am I punished so bitterly?"

KARL the voluble and sharp eyed, retailed a bit of gossip to Stampa that evening as they smoked in Johann Klucker's chalet. "As I was driving the cattle to the middle alp to-day, I saw our *fräulein* in the arms of the big voyager," he said.

Stampa withdrew his pipe from between his teeth. "Say that again!" he whispered, as though afraid of being overheard.

Karl did so, with fuller details.

"Are you sure?" asked Stampa.

Karl sniffed scornfully. "Ach, Gott! How could I err?" he cried. "There are not so many pretty women in the hotel that I should not recognize our *fräulein*. And who would forget Herr Bower? He gave me two louis for a ten-franc job. We must get them together on the hills again, Christian. He will be soft hearted now, and will pay us well for taking care of his lady."

"Yes," said Stampa, resuming his pipe, "you are right, Karl. There is no place like the hills. And he will pay—the highest price, look you! *Saperlotte!* I shall exact a heavy fee this time!"

To be concluded next Sunday.

The Witness in Wax

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of the jail. To add to his trouble, Madge Clerford was dangerously ill, as the result of the nervous strain of that awful morning. She had been unable to testify at the inquest; but her evidence was not essential, since the cylinder with its accusing voice, the voice of the dead, could be repeated at will.

The arrest of young Rance, charged with the murder of his father, had caused a sensation throughout the country. His great wealth had made John Rance a national figure, and, while his death was the cause of little personal sorrow, if any, the fact that he had been a hard man and a stern and unsympathetic father was not felt to excuse his son.

The widespread publicity of the affair made it difficult to obtain a jury; but on the third day the twelfth man took his seat in the box, and the trial was ready to proceed. The courtroom was packed to suffocation, and outside the courthouse crowds of morbid curiosity seekers clamored for entrance.

After the prosecutor had presented his case to the jury, the work of taking testimony went on rapidly. The prisoner's counsel were making a heroic fight; but the trend of evidence was entirely against him. At the inquest he had admitted the receipt of a letter from his father threatening him with disinheritance should he refuse to give up Miss Clerford. He had admitted making a hurried and unannounced visit to his home the night the murder took place. He had admitted having quarreled with the elder man; that the last words spoken between them were those which had been overheard by the maid, "Leave me! You are no son of mine! Blake draws up a new will tomorrow!" He admitted that the revolver was his; but stubbornly insisted that he had left it with his father at the latter's request before the dispute, as the old man declared he had an uneasy fear of burglars.

The demonstrator sent from the graphophone company for the purpose of reading the letters to the jury droned on and on. Rance's counsel had succeeded in having ruled out as incompetent evidence the transcription that the prosecution had made; but had been unable to have the records themselves excluded.

AN electric thrill ran through the courtroom when the demonstrator took up the last cylinder. The sensation of the trial was at hand; and the most damaging evidence, aside from the prisoner's own admissions, was contained in the cylinder of insensate wax before them.

Through the letter to Blake the demonstrator read. Then came the letter to Miss Clerford; and with the opening lines of the old man's letter to his son the stillness in the courtroom was profound. The jury leaned forward breathlessly. Even the young man from the graphophone company seemed to be imbued with the portent of the words he was reading, and there was a dramatic cadence to his voice as he paused for a moment at the break in the letter and then read clearly.

"Why, Jack, my son, you here? Have you come to your senses? I was just writing to you." Then, "That's all," he said, and removed the receivers.

In the dead silence that followed thrilled a clear, distinct voice, "Read the rest of the record!"

"Silence in the court!" said the Judge, looking sternly in the direction from which the voice had come. A slight, girlish figure rose hesitatingly and came forward.

"Your Honor," she said, and her voice shook and wavered as if every word would be the last, "I do not understand just what one should do in a court to be heard; but I ask that the operator be told to read the rest of the record."

The Judge glanced at the girl before him, then at the demonstrator, who still sat by the machine. "Read the rest!" he commanded.

"That's all; there isn't any more. The rest of the cylinder is blank," said the man.

"That is not all! I have heard, and I know!" "Finish the cylinder!" exclaimed the Judge to the demonstrator, and the man replaced the receivers. Slowly for the second time the needle journeyed round the expanse of wax. Those in the farthest corner of the room could hear the whirr of the mechanism. Then the man at the machine gave an amazed gasp. He listened intently for a moment, then moved the reproducer back and listened again.

"Well?" queried the Judge impatiently. "Gentlemen, there is something more on the

cylinder. There is a short, sharp crack, like a revolver shot, and the voice of the deceased crying loudly, "My God! Steve Clerford, you've killed me!"

FOR a moment there was silence. Then the prosecutor rose to his feet and announced that with the reading of the letters the State closed its case. Then Wells, of counsel for the prisoner, leaped to his feet, his eyes shining. It was only a chance; but he seized it.

"Your Honor," he said, "with your permission, I shall dispense with my formal presentation of the defense's case, and call Miss Madge Clerford as my first witness. Miss Clerford, will you please take the stand?"

Miss Clerford, having been duly sworn, deposed that on the morning after the crime she had been forced by Detective Hayden to read through all the letters on the cylinders.

"Miss Clerford, do you know this Stephen Clerford, whose name the deceased cried out in what was apparently his death agony?" asked Wells.

"He is my brother!"

Her brother! Even the District Attorney gave a little gasp of pity. This frail young girl knew that she must sacrifice either her lover or her brother,—she held the lives of both in the hollow of her hand! This was the awful battle she had fought out alone, knowing that whether she spoke or kept silence one of those dear to her must pay the penalty!

"Did your brother have any reason for wishing to put an end to Mr. Rance, any grudge against him?" asked Wells.

"He thought he had a grudge," answered the girl faintly. "Mr. Rance had discharged him, and he thought it unjust. He told me very little of it; he seemed very unlike himself. He said that Mr. Rance had stolen some papers about an invention of his that was to make him rich and famous, and that when he objected and tried to get Mr. Rance to give them up, Mr. Rance discharged him and had him thrown out of the office."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"No; I have not seen him since the night he came home and told me he had lost his position. He went out after supper, and I have not seen him nor heard from him."

"That was when?"

"About two days before Mr. Rance was shot."

"What was this invention of which you speak?"

"It was a contrivance to keep a trolley wheel pole from slipping from the overhead wire, I believe. Stephen wished to have it patented; but we had no money, so he went to Mr. Rance and asked his advice, knowing he was interested in such things. Mr. Rance told him it was worth little; but that he would see what could be done. Then Stephen found a letter, in which Mr. Rance represented the patent to be his own, and then when he accused Mr. Rance of stealing his invention he was threatened with arrest for attempted blackmail."

Wells paused a moment to let the jury get the full effect of the girl's words. Every man of them knew John Rance to be fully capable of such a deed as she described.

THERE was a little bustle at the back of the courtroom; a man pushed his way through the crowd. His face was drawn and ghastly pale; one arm rested in an improvised sling; and at every step he took his white lips twitched with the pain that racked his wasted body.

Straight to the Judge he went, and none interfered. There was something about the lean, shrunken figure with its sunken, pain filled eyes that held back the hands that otherwise would have been outstretched to bar his progress. The little buzz of astonishment that filled the room died away as the man began to speak in a weak, quavering voice.

"I want to tell you gentlemen before I go over the divide. Only a few minutes left—I—" "I object, your Honor!" shouted the District Attorney. "This is very irregular!"

But the Judge was a man, as well as an interpreter of the law. "It may be irregular, Mr. Raddin," he returned; "but I take it that you are not desirous of increasing your number of convictions by adding to it that of an innocent man. 'Proceed!' he added, turning to the newcomer.

"I'm Clerford," the latter resumed, "Steve Clerford."

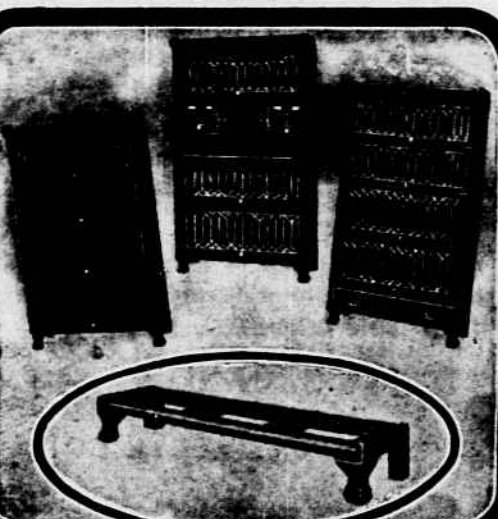
"Your Honor," interrupted Wells, "if Mr.

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Clerford is to testify, should he not be sworn?" But Clerford answered for himself. "No—not time. Dying—dying men don't lie. I—One of the detectives thrust a chair forward, and the man sank heavily into it. "I worked hard," he went on after a moment, "and then Rance got ahead of me. Went to him—he laughed. Door—open. Son came out. Rance mad. He shot first—I got him!" Clerford's head sank forward on his breast, and some one held a flask to his lips. The liquor seemed to revive him.

"He deserved all he got," he said in a stronger voice. "I shouldn't have told, only for Madge. Let the son suffer. Father, son—all alike. Do him good. Models, papers, all spoiled—blood—blotted out. Life's work Madge gave me away—for him. Betrayed her brother—for him!" pointing at Jack Rance with a shaking forefinger.

"Oh, Stevie, Stevie, I couldn't help it!" sobbed the girl. "It hurt to tell; but I only did what was right!"

Clerford rose painfully to his feet. "Right? I—don't know. But somewhere there's—the God—of things as they—ought to be. He—knows!"

The voice faltered and ceased. The pitiful figure wavered for a moment; then, as a detective stepped to his side and laid a hand on his arm, Stephen Clerford half turned, reaching out uncertain arms toward his sister, swayed slightly, and then fell forward.

The awestricken hush in the courtroom was broken by a woman's anguished cry, as Madge Clerford dropped on her knees by the prostrate figure, sobbing out:

"Oh, Stevie, Stevie, dear, speak to me! It's Madge, your little sister who loves you! Speak to me, Stevie!"

But the soul of Stephen Clerford had gone to meet the God of things as they ought to be.

THE Rance home to-day is a handsome one. The furniture and appointments are splendid, and into the spacious rooms are crowded many rare and beautiful objects. But there is one at sight of which visitors often raise their eyebrows in surprise, so incongruous it seems in the midst of its surroundings. It is a little dark brown cylinder, resting on a bed of crimson velvet, and no hand but that of Mrs. Jack Rance is ever permitted even to dust the glass globe that covers it.

And of all the treasures in his lovely home, there is none more precious in the estimation of Jack Rance himself. For it first showed him to what heights of sacrifice and self abnegation a woman's love may reach; and it was the same devotion that drew from the mute witness in the wax the words that brought Jack Rance back into the world of life and hope again.

DRUDGERY OF MUSIC

WHEN an interviewer, who had put to Kubelik a question as to the number of hours a day he practised, was answered, "Practically all my waking hours," it is probable that the interrogator, as well as others who heard the reply, thought the response a bit of artistic exaggeration. Yet there is much evidence to sustain Kubelik's assertion.

Paganini the greatest of all violinists, was compelled by an avaricious father to practise twelve or fourteen hours each day. So wearied did Paganini become of this drudgery, that for several years he actually laid aside the instrument over which he had such consummate control and devoted himself to agricultural pursuits. This period of musical disgust soon passed, however, and the violinist again turned to his hard work, and to such good purpose that there was nothing written for the violin, no matter what its technical difficulties might be, that he was not able to play. Late in his life Paganini gave over his practising, for the reason, it is said, that he then played only his own compositions.

A saying of Rubinstein's indicates concisely the importance of unwearying practice: "Should I not practise for a day, I know it; should I miss two days, my friends know it; and should I miss three days, even the public knows it."

Joachim, another violinist during his student days was an inmate of the house of his master, and it was largely due to the inexorable demands to practise that the teacher laid on him that Joachim was enabled to attain his proud position. The room wherein the pupil practised was without any window; but had a glass panel in the door. If the sound of Joachim's violin ceased for a moment during the hours set apart for practice, then could be seen the scowling face of the instructor peering through the panel. Joachim practised one composition—the difficult Beethoven Concerto—for over sixty years.

Mendelssohn has left an interesting observation touching his arduous hours of practice. Speaking of certain recitals he was giving on the organ, he said, "I became so interested in my work that whole days passed like hours. I practised pedal passages to such an extent that the act of walking along the street actually transformed itself into a fugue, so automatic had my movements become."

With regard to his practising Paderewski entertains some odd notions, one of which is a penchant for a nocturnal running of the scales. The great Pole has been known to spend the whole night in achieving perfection in one or two runs of a composition he is studying.

Paderewski has said that the greatest foe a musician has to fight is the feeling of satiety that is sure to oppress him should his work be not well apportioned. Each season the Pole finds that he must acquire some twenty to thirty new compositions. So hard does he work at these, that at the conclusion of his short tour he cannot endure to hear a single bar of any of them. Like many other musicians, he is saved from inaction only by the acquirement of novelties.

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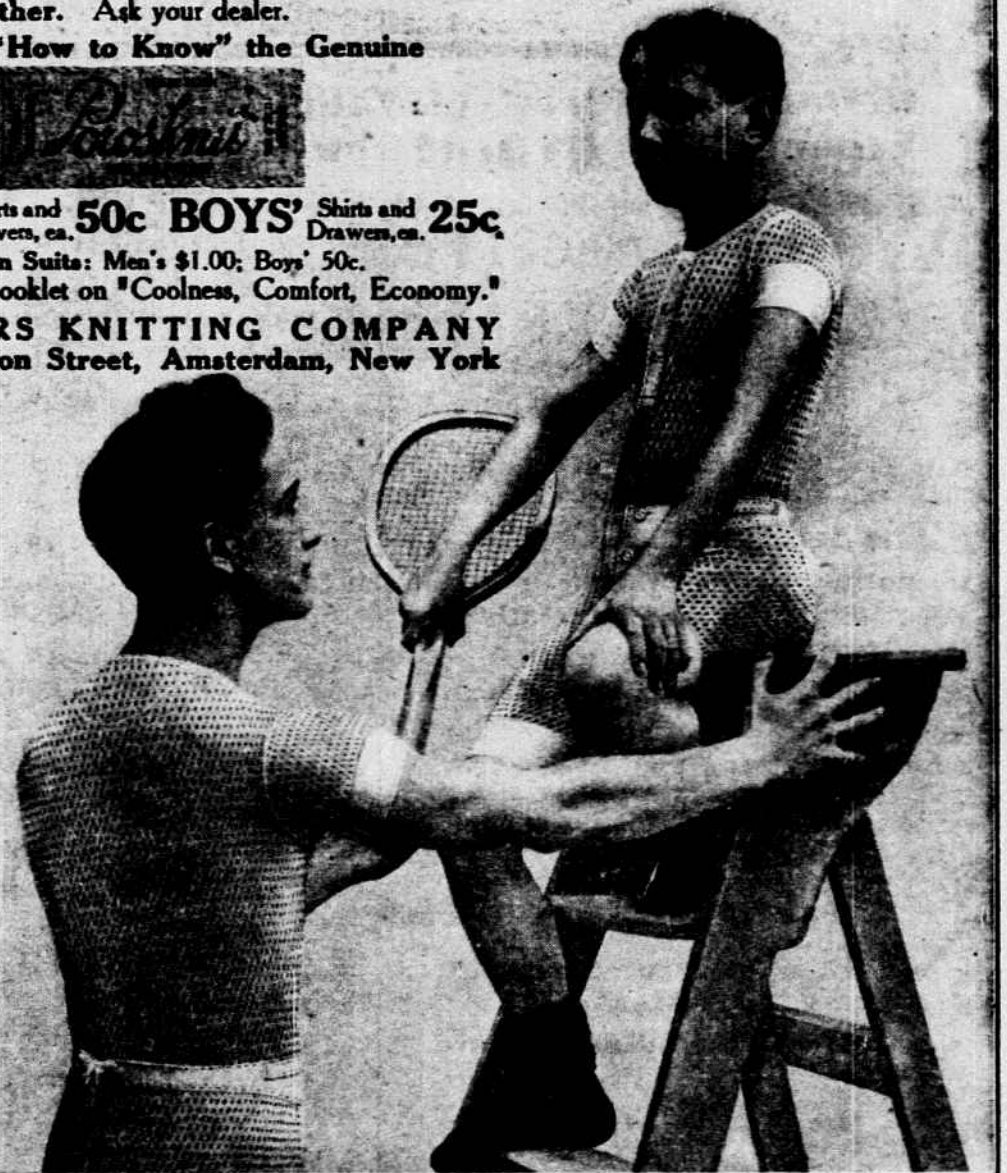


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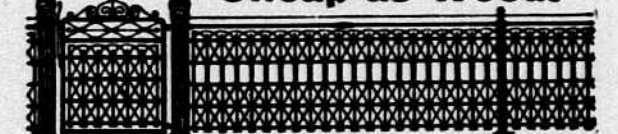
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